

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY  
**President's Dinner**

**November 5, 2025**

**UT OMNES TE COGNOSCANT**



***Celebrating Our Students***

# Rev. James J. Maher, C.M.

PRESIDENT

It is a wonderful time to be a student at Niagara University. We have retained our status as Western New York's private institution with the largest enrollment, at 3,800 students, and we are proud to have 1,155 students living on the Lewiston campus, including over 70% of the freshman class. This is a testament to our commitment to fostering a vibrant and engaged campus life that supports academic success and personal growth.

I am also pleased to say that Niagara University has been named the university that offers the best value in the North by *U.S. News & World Report* for the second consecutive year. This is a tremendous honor and validates our commitment to providing a high-quality, transformational education that is accessible and affordable for all students. The availability of scholarships was a major consideration in this ranking.



Equally important, Niagara continues to serve as a vital anchor for our region, with an annual economic impact of more than \$218.4 million, a reflection of how our mission extends beyond campus to strengthen Western New York and the surrounding areas. The value of investing in higher education, particularly at institutions like Niagara, cannot be overstated. Our graduates experience an average return on investment of approximately \$1.91 million over 40 years, a clear measure of how access to higher education drives both individual prosperity and sustained regional growth. Supporting the programs that make this access possible is not only an educational imperative, it is a powerful economic one.

Tonight's President's Dinner is an extraordinary opportunity for us to come together to provide this critical assistance to support our students and their futures. It is wonderful to be here with all of you to witness the generosity that will help our students find their wings and soar.

This evening, we are privileged to honor remarkable recipients whose lives and work exemplify Niagara University's Catholic and Vincentian mission. We celebrate Scott Bieler, President and CEO of West Herr Automotive Group and President of the Bieler Family Foundation, as the recipient of the St. Vincent de Paul Award for his extraordinary leadership, compassion, and commitment to enriching the lives of others. We also honor in a very special way the Vincentian Community in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission. To recognize their centuries-long service to the poor and marginalized, and nearly 170 years of spiritual and educational ministry at NU, we present the Vincentians with the Ozanam Medal.

Tonight, we celebrate our students, our inspirational honorees, and the loyal generosity of everyone gathered in this room. Please enjoy this evening of fellowship, inspiration, and gratitude as we together advance the mission of Niagara University.

A special thank you to our Chair Couple, Dr. Thomas A. and Jennifer Summers, and to the many Niagara University staff members whose talent and dedication made this evening possible - from planning and logistics to student engagement and hospitality. To our Trustees, Advisors, Sponsors, Patrons, Faculty, and Staff - your support and partnership mean the world to us.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James J. Maher, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. James J. Maher, C.M.

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## Dr. Thomas A., '84, and Jennifer Summers 2025 CHAIR COUPLE

As Chair Couple, it is our great honor to welcome you to the 2025 President's Dinner. This evening is a celebration of Niagara University's mission and the life-changing impact that your generosity makes possible. Together, we are empowering students to achieve their dreams, strengthening our community, and shaping the next generation of leaders.



Niagara University has played a profound role in our lives – for Tom as a proud member of the Class of 1984, and for both of us as champions of its mission today. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to stand alongside you in this important work. Your presence here tonight reflects your commitment to Niagara's Vincentian values of service, leadership, and compassion.

We are privileged to partner with the university and the talented staff who have worked so hard to make this evening a success. The scholarships supported by this event open doors of opportunity, ensuring that every student has the chance to learn, grow, and make a difference.

It is our hope that you leave tonight inspired by the stories you hear and the vision of what we can accomplish together. Thank you for your generosity, your friendship, and for believing in the bright future of Niagara University.

With heartfelt gratitude,

*Thomas and Jennifer*

Dr. Thomas A., '84, and Jennifer Summers | 2025 Chair Couple



# 2025 President's Dinner

PROGRAM



## **Welcome**

Maryalice Demler, '86, and Rev. Craig D. Pridgen  
Board of Trustees members

## **Presentation of Colors**

Niagara University ROTC

## **National Anthems**

Brianna Garcia, '26

## **Land Acknowledgment**

Nathan Clough, '29

## **Invocation**

Rev. John T. Maher, C.M., '76

## **Chair Couple's Welcome**

Dr. Thomas A., '84, and Jennifer Summers

## **Dinner**

## **Student Reflection**

Caleb Calhoun, '26 | Luci Cryan, '27 | Christina Stokes, '26

## **Presentation of the Ozanam Medal**

The Vincentian Community

In Honor of the 400th Anniversary of the Congregation of the Mission

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**Presentation of the St. Vincent de Paul Award**

Scott Bieler

President and CEO, West Herr Automotive Group  
The Scott Bieler Family Foundation

**President's Address**

Rev. James J. Maher, C.M.  
President, Niagara University

**Closing Prayer**

Ava Palo, '26

**Final Remarks**

Maryalice Demler, '86, and Rev. Craig D. Pridgen



# Honorees

## The Vincentian Community

In Honor of the 400th Anniversary of the Congregation of the Mission

Founded in 1625 by St. Vincent de Paul, the Congregation of the Mission—known as the Vincentians—has carried forth a legacy of faith, service, and compassion for 400 years. Today, more than 3,000 Vincentian priests and brothers serve in 95 countries, living out vows of simplicity, humility, and zeal while ministering to the poor and marginalized. Their mission is as relevant today as it was four centuries ago, inspiring hope and transformation in communities across the globe.



Niagara University was established by the Vincentians in 1856, and their enduring presence has shaped the very heart of the institution. The Vincentian charism is evident in Niagara's commitment to educating students for lives of service and leadership, and in its ongoing work to provide access and opportunity to those most in need.

At this year's President's Dinner, we proudly honor the Vincentian Community on the 400th Anniversary of the Congregation of the Mission. Their remarkable legacy continues to guide Niagara University's mission and serves as a living example of faith in action.

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## Scott Bieler

President and CEO, West Herr Automotive Group  
The Scott Bieler Family Foundation

Scott Bieler began his career with the West Herr Automotive Group in 1975 as a salesman and steadily rose through the ranks to become President in 1997 and majority owner in 2000. Under his leadership, West Herr has grown from a single dealership in Hamburg to the largest automotive group in New York State—and one of the largest privately owned auto groups in the nation—with 40 locations representing 27 franchises and employing more than 3,000 people across Upstate New York.



Beyond his professional success, Scott has dedicated his life to philanthropy and civic leadership. Through the Scott Bieler Family Foundation, he and his wife, Kathy, have supported transformative projects across the region. Most recently, Scott's generosity has extended to Niagara University with the establishment of the Bieler Institute of Business Ethics. This visionary initiative ensures that Niagara's students are prepared to lead with integrity, responsibility, and compassion, carrying forward values that align with both the Bieler family's philanthropy and Niagara's Vincentian mission.

With his hallmark blend of entrepreneurial excellence, generosity, and community commitment, Scott continues to uplift countless lives and set an inspiring example of leadership in our communities and beyond.

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## *Special Thanks*

### **Event Chair Couple**

Dr. Thomas A., '84, and Jennifer Summers

### **Emcees**

Maryalice Demler, '86, and Rev. Craig D. Pridgen

### **Institutional Advancement and Events Team**

Jaclyn Rossi Drozd

David Lason

Krystina Burow

Paul Zablocki

Heather Smith

Michael Jeswald

Courtney Corbetta

Kathy Sydor

Faith Dilley

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Holly Beaston



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Thomas, '74, and Dorothea Obst, '75

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